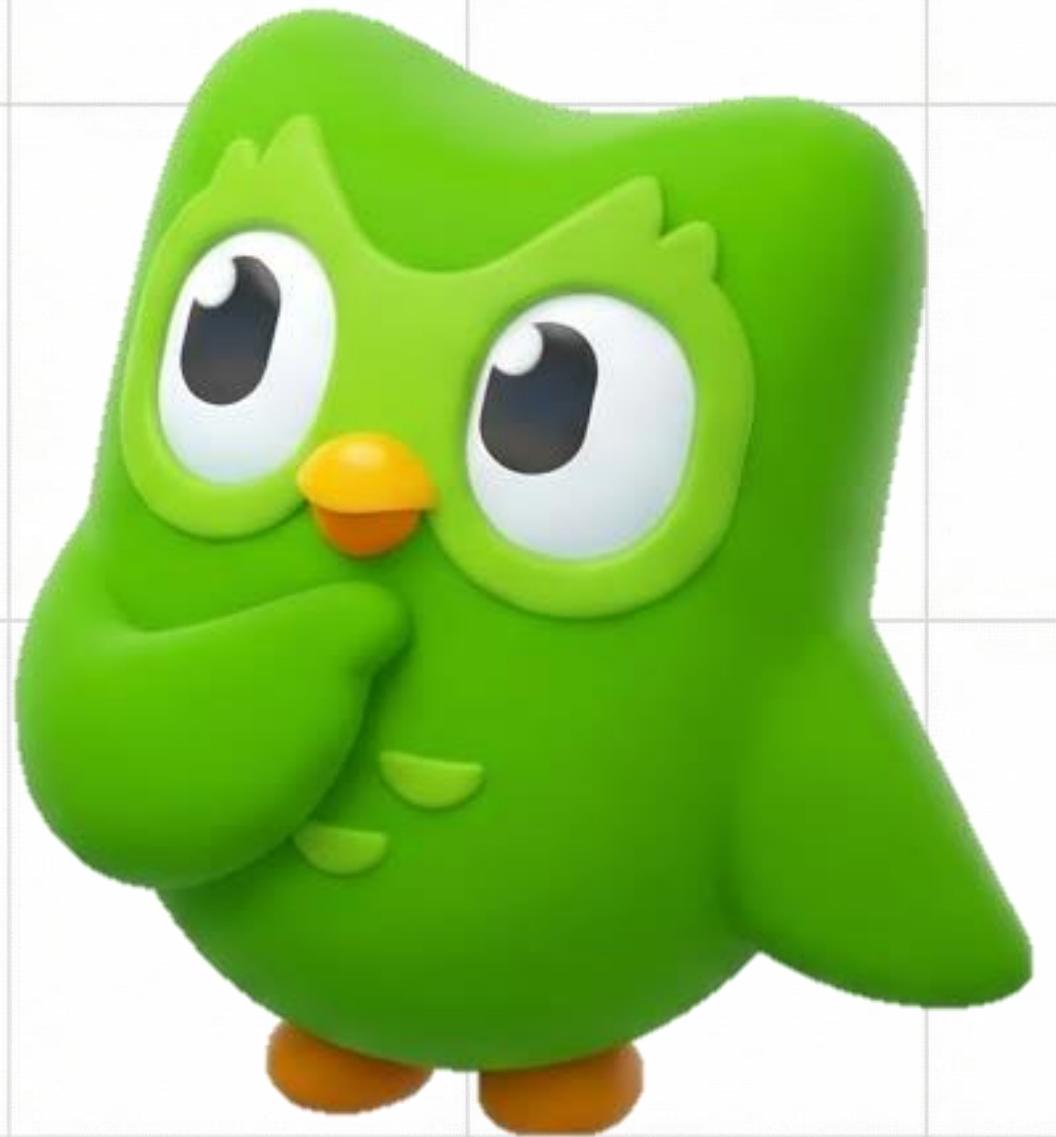


# Duolingo: Playing While Learning?

A UX Research Study on  
Gamification Features

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# The Duolingo Dilemma

01

## Popularity.

The world's #1 language app, celebrated for its game-like design and minimalist interface.



02

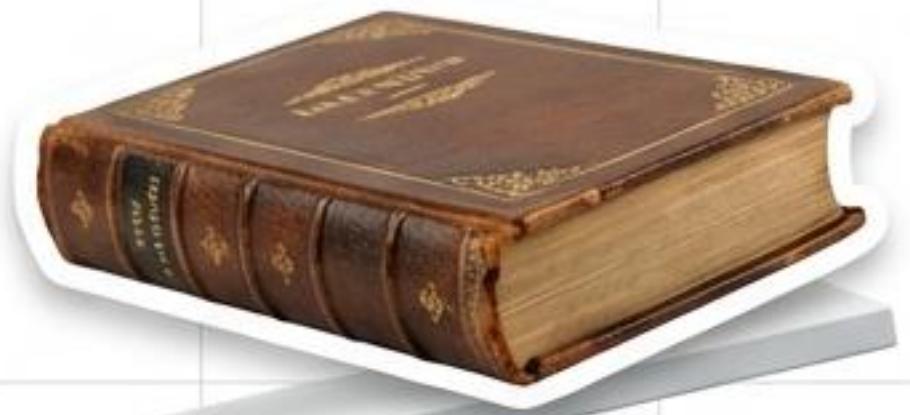
## The Hypothesis.

An intense focus on gamification may come at the cost of deep instructional 'lecture content.'

02

## The Core Question.

Does the 'game' support or overshadow the 'learning'?



# Our Two-Pronged Investigation

## The Expert Review

**01 Method:**  
Heuristic Evaluation

**02 Who:** 2 long-term, expert users

**03 Framework:** Nielsen's 10 Heuristics,  
augmented with custom principles for  
'Fun & Enjoyment' and 'User Loyalty.'



## The Novice Experience

**01 Method:**  
Usability Testing

**02 Who:** 2 first-time users learning a new language (French)

**03 Technique:** 'Think-Aloud' protocol to capture unfiltered, real-time feedback.



# Perspectives: The Veteran & The Rookie

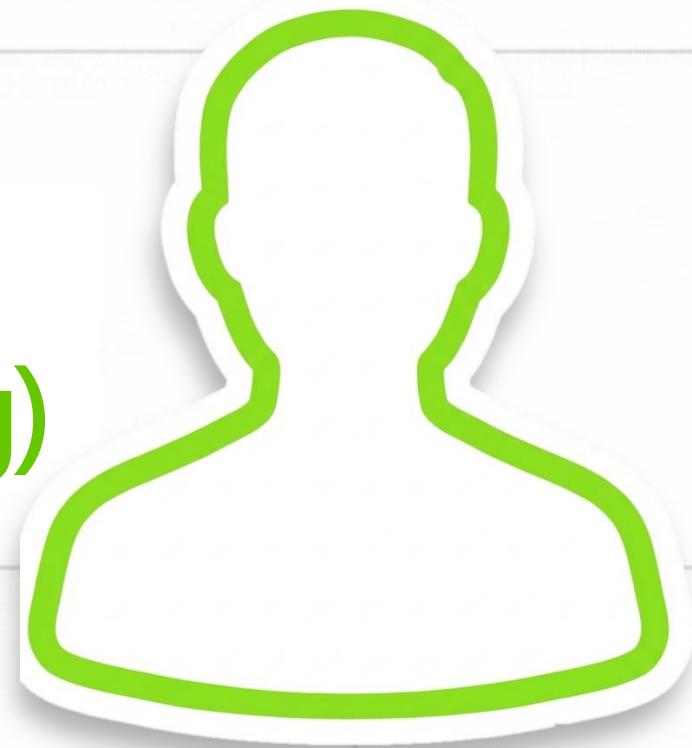
## The Veterans (Expert Review)



**01** **User A:** 1.5 years of usage, current user.

**02** **User B:** Former user, quit after a broken streak.

## The Rookies (Usability Testing)



**03** **User C:** No prior French experience.

**04** **User D:** No prior French experience.

# Veteran's Verdict: Depth Over Dailies

## 01 No Big Picture

Inability to track overall progress or review a complete list of mastered vocabulary.

## 02 Feedback Without Context

Errors are corrected but never explained, missing crucial grammar lessons. Users are forced to Google answers.

## 03 The Stress of the Streak

Gamification evolves from a motivator into a source of anxiety, distracting from the learning goal.



*“I want to do this to learn languages, but now I'm just doing it to keep the streak going. It wasn't satisfying.”*

# Rookie's Reality: A Confusing First Day

## 01 Disorienting Start

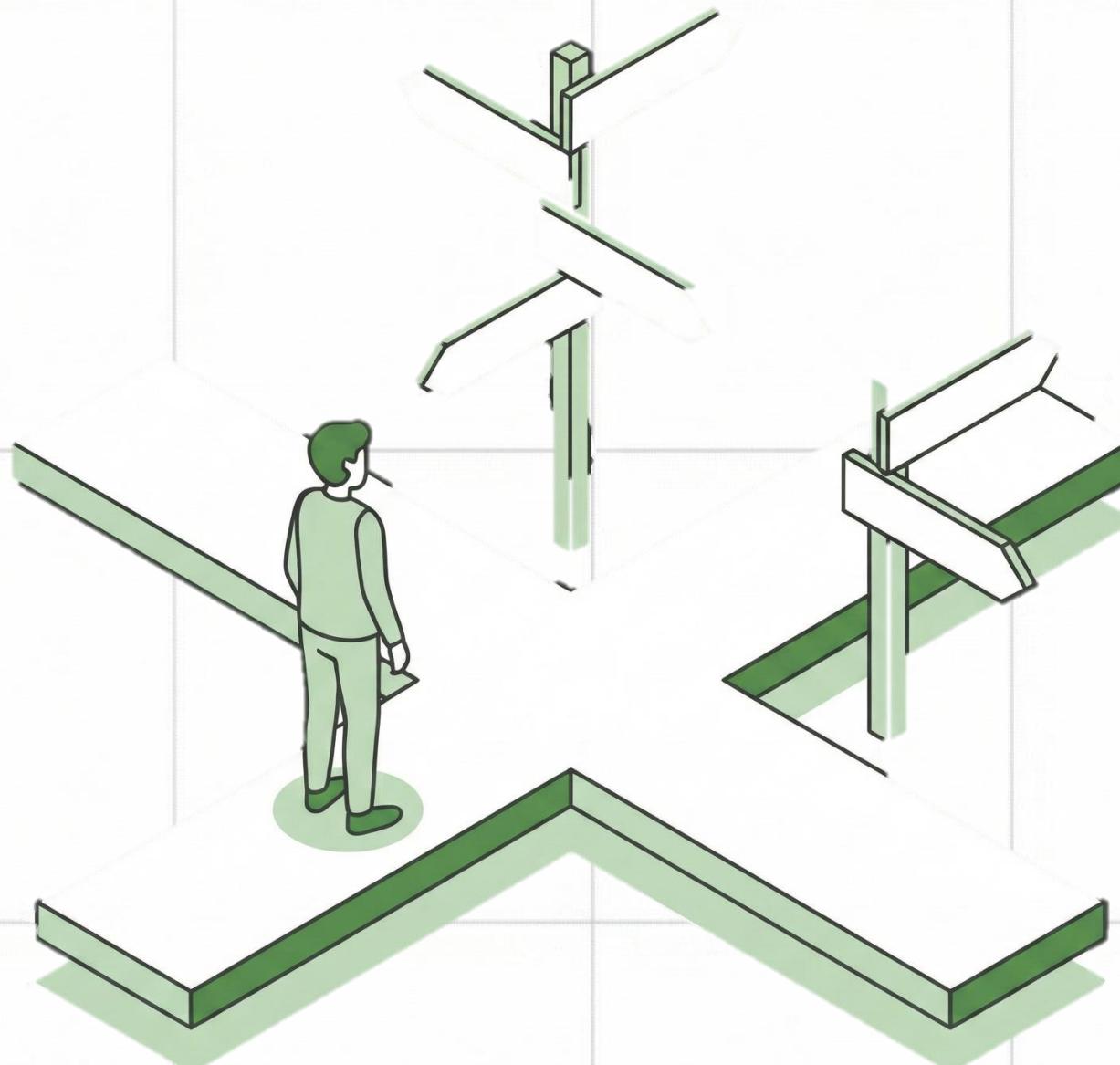
Users were 'startled' to thrown directly into a lesson with no tutorial, homepage, or orientation.

## 02 Ambiguous Icons

Key UI elements (like the headphone icon) lack labels. Forcing users to guess their function.

## 03 No Easy Undos

Frustration in sentence-building tasks due to the lack of a clear correction or 'undo' function after a mistake.



# The Core Insight: The Grammar Gap

**The Unifying Problem:** A severe lack of foundational content—specifically **Grammar** rules and a personal Dictionary—was identified by BOTH user groups.

## Impact on Rookies:

Lessons felt like a 'waste of time,' relying on guessing, not understanding.

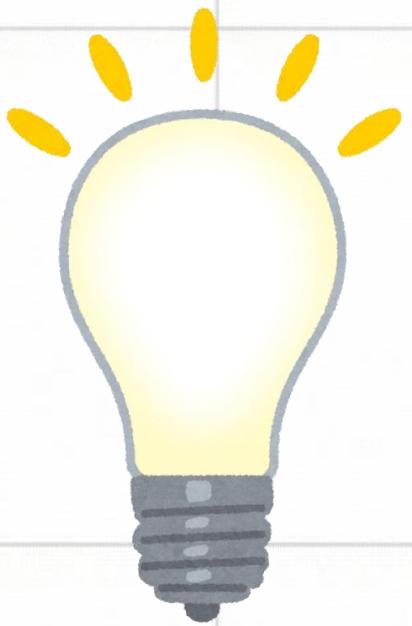
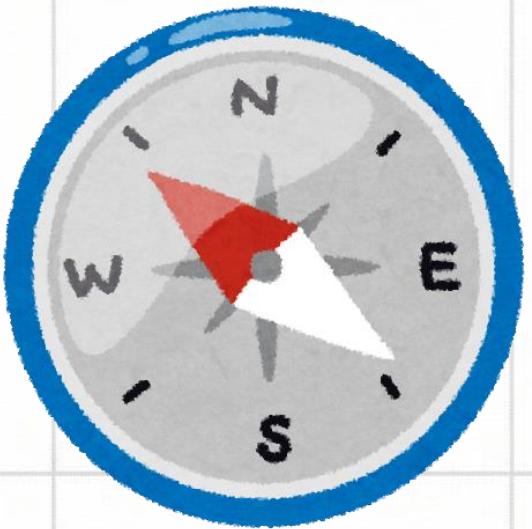


## Impact on Veterans:

Forced to leave the app and use Google to understand their own mistakes.

The app excels at *quizzing* but fails at *teaching* the fundamental structure of a language.

# Recommendations: Building the Bridge



## 01 Guided Onboarding

Implement a tutorial or 'guided tour' to introduce the UI and lesson structure *before* the first test begins.

## 02 Actionable Feedback

When an error occurs, provide concise, contextual grammar explanations, not just the correct answer.

## 03 A knowledge Hub

Create a dedicated section for Grammar Notes and a Personal Dictionary for review and self-study outside the main game loop.

# Conclusion: From Gamified App to Learning Companion



**Today:** Duolingo's gamification successfully drives engagement but creates barriers to deep learning.

**The Barriers:** For novices, a lack of guidance. For experts, a lack of depth.

**The Future:** To achieve long-term retention, the app must evolve from a 'game that teaches' into a 'learning tool that is fun.'